



# THE PHYSIO CLINIC

Movement Health Performance

## Achilles Tendinopathy

### What is Achilles Tendinopathy?

The Achilles tendon connects the calf (the back of the lower part of your leg) muscles to the heel bone. It helps you to push up on your tiptoes. Achilles tendinopathy is an injury to this tendon. It is most often due to an overload when the tendon cannot recover quick enough with the load being put on it. Achilles tendon injuries can be separated into insertional (bottom) tendinopathy (20%–25% of the injuries), midportion tendinopathy (55%–65%), and proximal (top) musculotendinous junction (9%–25%) injuries, according to the location of pain.

### Risk factors

- Getting older – because your Achilles tendon becomes less flexible and less able to cope with stress
- If you've injured your tendon or the muscles around it in the past
- Certain long-term health conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis, diabetes, high cholesterol or thyroid problems



### Common causes

A common cause of Achilles tendinopathy is training error. Whether that be an increase in frequency, intensity or speed in various activities such as walking or running.

### How can we fix it?

Given the right environment in terms of activity levels and recovery it will adapt and symptoms will settle. Your treatment will normally have three phases:

**Phase 1** – Calm it down, modify or reduce activities like running to a level in which the Achilles can manage

**Phase 2** – Strengthen – Build strength in the calf muscle and tendon

**Phase 3** – When symptoms have settled, we can gradually build up our activity

### When will you notice pain?

Pain is often present first thing in the morning, or when you begin to walk after resting for a period. The pain can be variable, and it can feel better as you keep moving. You might notice it can be painful after lots of weight-bearing activities, such as walking or running. In some cases, the tendon might become red, warm and tender to touch, and swollen or thickened in appearance.

### How to manage pain

- Relative rest
- Reduce activities on your feet, such as prolonged walking or running
- Keep up your fitness by doing other forms of exercise, such as cycling or swimming
- Pain relief. You can use painkillers for short-term pain relief.
- Ice. Wrap ice in a towel and put it on the area. This can help with pain and swelling in the early stages. Do not put ice directly onto the skin
- Footwear. Choose supportive footwear, rather than flat shoes.

